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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 000167

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TFHA01: COLOMBIA'S LARGEST HUMANITARIAN EFFORT EVER

REF: BOGOTA 105

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Colombian assistance to Haiti is ongoing and is the largest overseas humanitarian effort in the country's history. The Ambassador and Government of Colombia (GOC) officials highlighted Colombian assistance to Haiti at a public appearance with a backdrop of Colombian and U.S. troops loading Colombian humanitarian supplies onto a U.S. C-130 destined for Haiti. The Colombian Vice Minister of Health expressed the GOC's willingness to accept a small number of Haitian patients pending availability of resources and the resolution of several logistical issues for the patients and accompanying family members. Colombia offered to increase its MINUSTAH officers in Haiti from 27 to 35 in response to a U.N. request for additional MINUSTAH forces. President Uribe announced plans to attend an UNASUR meeting to address regional Haiti assistance efforts. Colombian National Police (CNP) General Oscar Naranjo will travel soon to Haiti at the invitation of the United Nations; the CNP offered to host 100 children of Haitian police for one year. End Summary.

U.S. Transports Colombian-Donated Supplies to Haiti

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador and GOC officials attended an event to send off a U.S. C-130 destined for Haiti on February 4. The plane contained six pallets of humanitarian supplies that will be distributed in Haiti by U.S. forces from Guantanamo. The Ambassador praised Colombian relief efforts in Haiti and highlighted ongoing U.S.-Colombia cooperation. He also noted that the same C-130 had earlier delivered U.S.-donated firefighting equipment to Palanquero base, one of seven bases identified in the Defense Cooperation Agreement. The U.S. donation will help combat forest fires in many parts of Colombia (septel). The event received extensive media coverage.

Embassy Explores Further USG-Colombia Cooperation

¶3. (SBU) Emboffs met with Vice Minister of Health Carlos Cuervo Valencia and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 5 to discuss possible transfer of Haitian patients to Colombia for medical treatment. Cuervo expressed the GOC's willingness to accept between five and ten Haitian patients pending availability of resources and the resolution of several key logistical concerns, including transportation of the patients to Colombia, lodging, language, and consular issues for the patients and accompanying family members. He also emphasized that the GOC

has yet to identify how hospitals will be reimbursed for providing care, with private hospitals more likely to be able to shoulder the burden. Cuervo agreed to reach out to various health institutions and provide the Embassy a list of available hospitals, points of contact, and other information next week.

14. (SBU) The GOC has been discussing other areas of possible Colombian assistance with the Haitian Interior Minister. The Colombian Ministry of Interior has drafted a proposal for post-disaster reconstruction, including a rehabilitation center for Haitian amputees, school construction, and technical assistance, sharing its experience from a tragic earthquake in Colombia. Colombia has committed eight additional MINUSTAH officers in response to the U.N. request for additional MINUSTAH forces, raising the Colombian MINUSTAH presence to 35 police. The GOC has also offered to send 40 additional Armed Forces troops to Haiti.

15. (SBU) The Colombian Air Force had earlier considered transporting three Haitian patients for treatment in Colombian hospitals at the request of a Colombian doctor in Haiti. However, it was determined the patients could be treated appropriately in Haiti.

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16. (U) Haitian exports to Colombia are traditionally not significant -- approximately \$204,000 worth of goods in 2008. However, Post plans to inquire with GOC trade officials on the viability of symbolically eliminating or reducing tariffs on Haitian products entering Colombia.

UNASUR to Discuss Regional Cooperation

17. (SBU) Ecuador has reached out to UNASUR countries, organizing a meeting on February 9 to address assistance to Haiti. President Uribe plans to attend, but MFA officials told us an official agenda is still pending.

CNP Offer to Host 100 Haitian Children

18. (U) The Colombian National Police (CNP)-- continuing a history of close cooperation between the police forces of the two countries -- has offered to host 100 children (aged 7-16) of Haitian police officials to study at CNP schools in Colombia for one year. The Haitian children would stay with Colombian host families in police communities. The MFA reports that legal issues are still being worked out, but the beneficiaries of the program would be children of Haitian police with parental permission.

19. (U) The CNP also sent 160 tons of supplies to the Haitian police as well as 20 police medical personnel to assist police and their families. CNP General Oscar Naranjo announced that he will be traveling to Haiti at the invitation of the United Nations within the next few days.

Ongoing Colombian Aid

¶10. (U) According to the MFA's Office of International Cooperation, Colombia currently has 111 personnel on the ground in Haiti, including 20-30 doctors. Moreover, the Colombians have distributed 300 tons of food to 93,000 Haitians through the Colombian Red Cross. Colombian search and rescue teams rescued three people from the rubble and returned the remains of 198 Haitian victims to their families.

¶11. (SBU) Colombia has sent a total of 2,937 tons of humanitarian supplies via sea and air, a field medical detachment, police units, search and rescue teams, and 440 personnel to Haiti. The Colombian navy ship Cartagena continues to unload supplies in Haiti and will remain in Port-au-Prince for the next 45 days providing medical care for Haitians in its sick bays. A second ship, the Buenaventura, left Colombia on February 4 with 930,204 pounds of humanitarian supplies. It is scheduled to arrive in Haiti on February 11.

¶12. (SBU) SOUTHCOM has officially accepted Colombian military forces working in Haiti under its support structure to include the Colombian military field medical detachment. The Colombian military is looking for a bilingual liaison officer to facilitate coordination with the U.S. military in Haiti.

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